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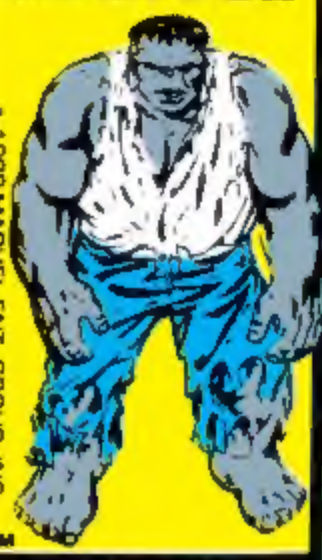

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AUTHORITY

THE INCREDIBLE HULK®

McFARLANE

"WHEN SHE CAME BARRELING OUT OF THE WOODS, MAN, I COULDN'T *BELIEVE* IT.

"S'FUNNY. I WOULD'VE THOUGHT, AFTER EVERYTHING I'VE SEEN, *NOTHING* COULD SURPRISE ME. MY *MISTAKE*.

"THEN AGAIN, I'M *FAMOUS* FOR MY MISTAKES. I MADE A *BEAUT* YEARS AGO. I'M STILL MAKING UP FOR IT.

"MAYBE YOU *READ* ABOUT IT."

HELP...

"I DROVE A JEEP OUT ONTO A GAMMA-RAY BOMB TESTING AREA. A GUY NAMED BANNER *SAVED* ME, BUT GOT CAUGHT IN THE *BLAST*. HE *SURVIVED*... BUT HIS LIFE WAS NEVER THE SAME... BECAUSE OF ME.

"SINCE THEN I'VE BEEN PARTNERS WITH TWO CAPTAINS, SAVED THE UNIVERSE, GOTTEN CANCER, GOTTEN GREEN, GOTTEN BETTER...

"LIKE I SAID, I'VE SEEN IT *ALL*, OR *THOUGHT* I HAD, UNTIL *SHE* SHOWED UP.

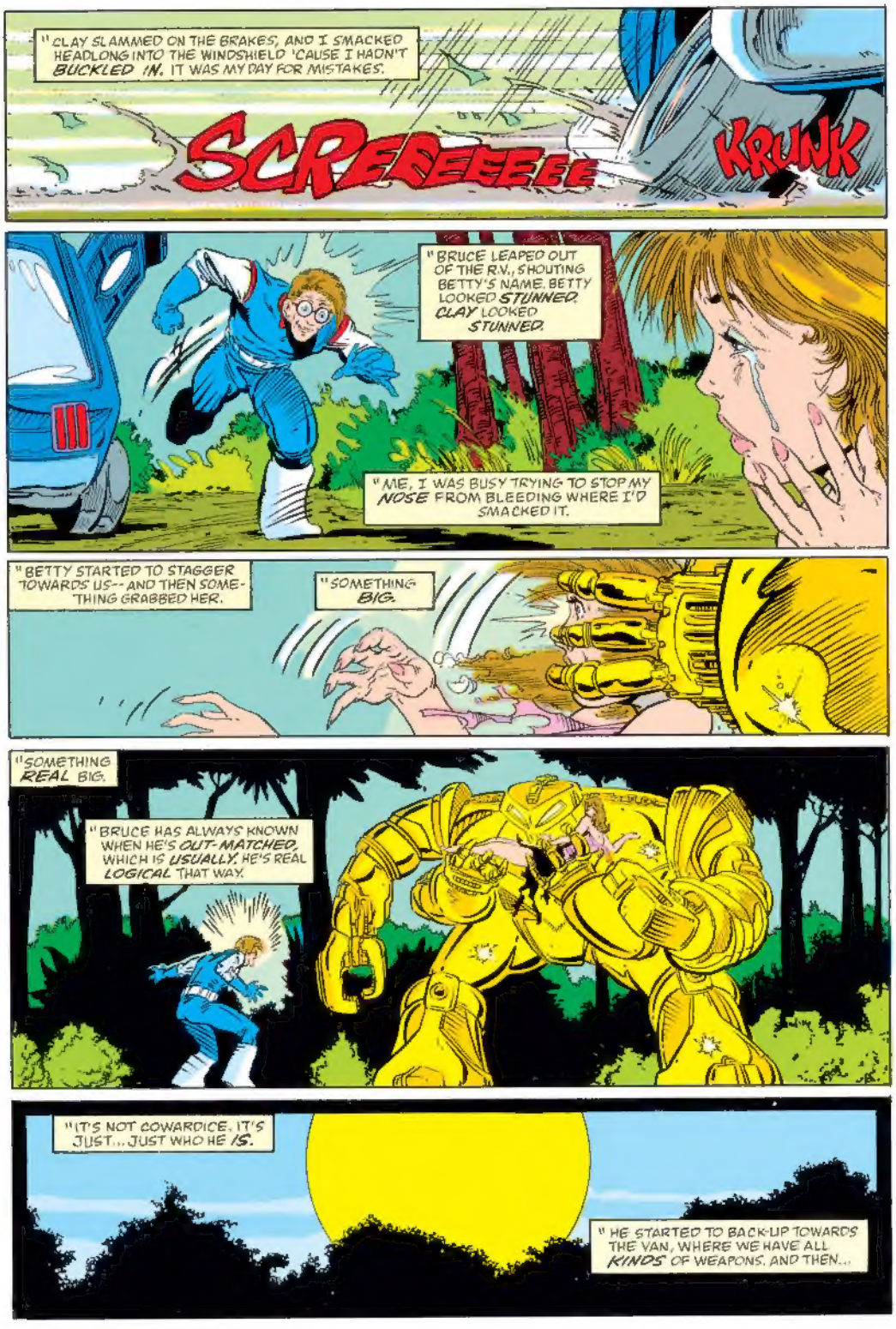
"WHO AM *I*? I THOUGHT IT WAS *OBVIOUS*.

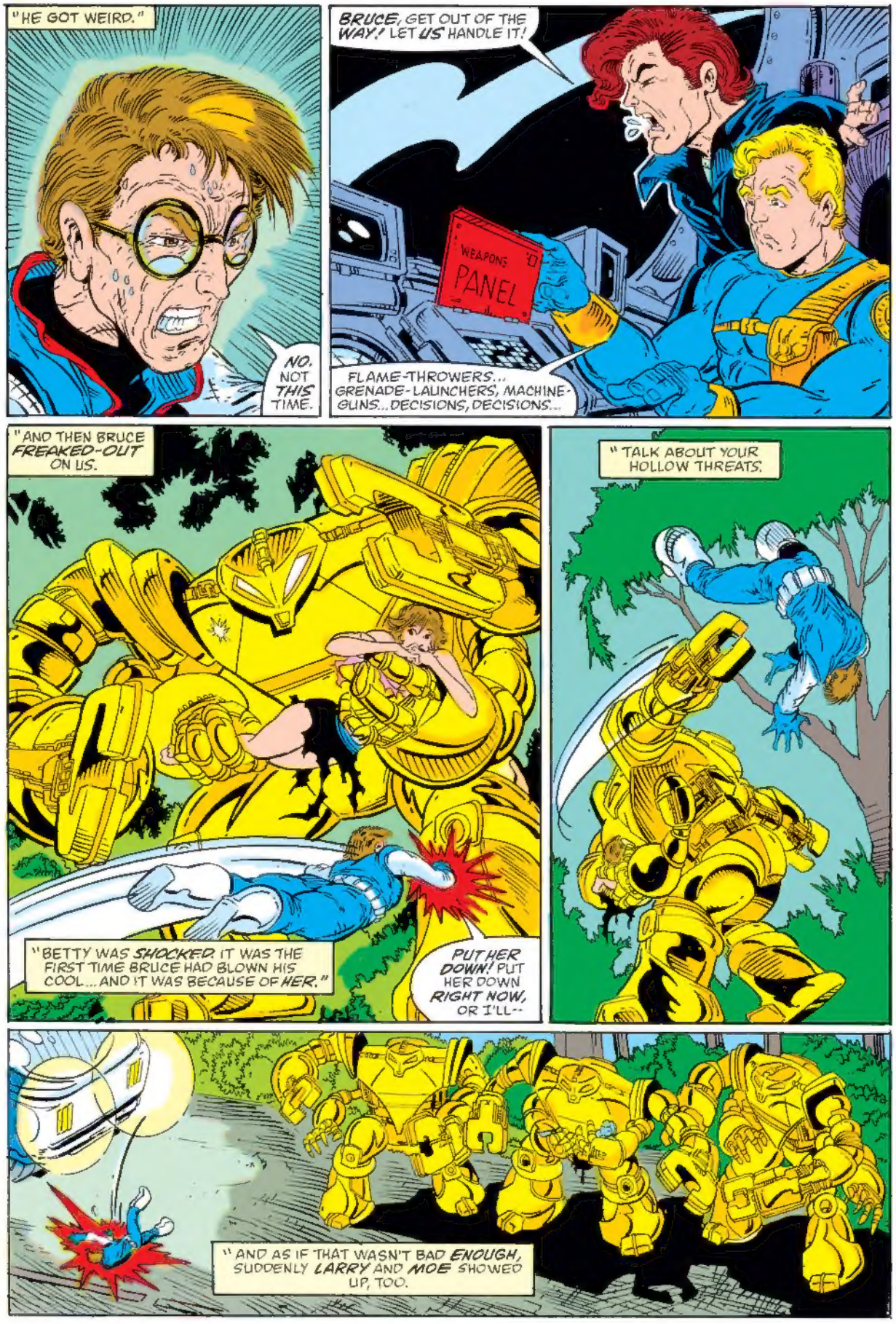
"MY NAME'S *RICK JONES*.

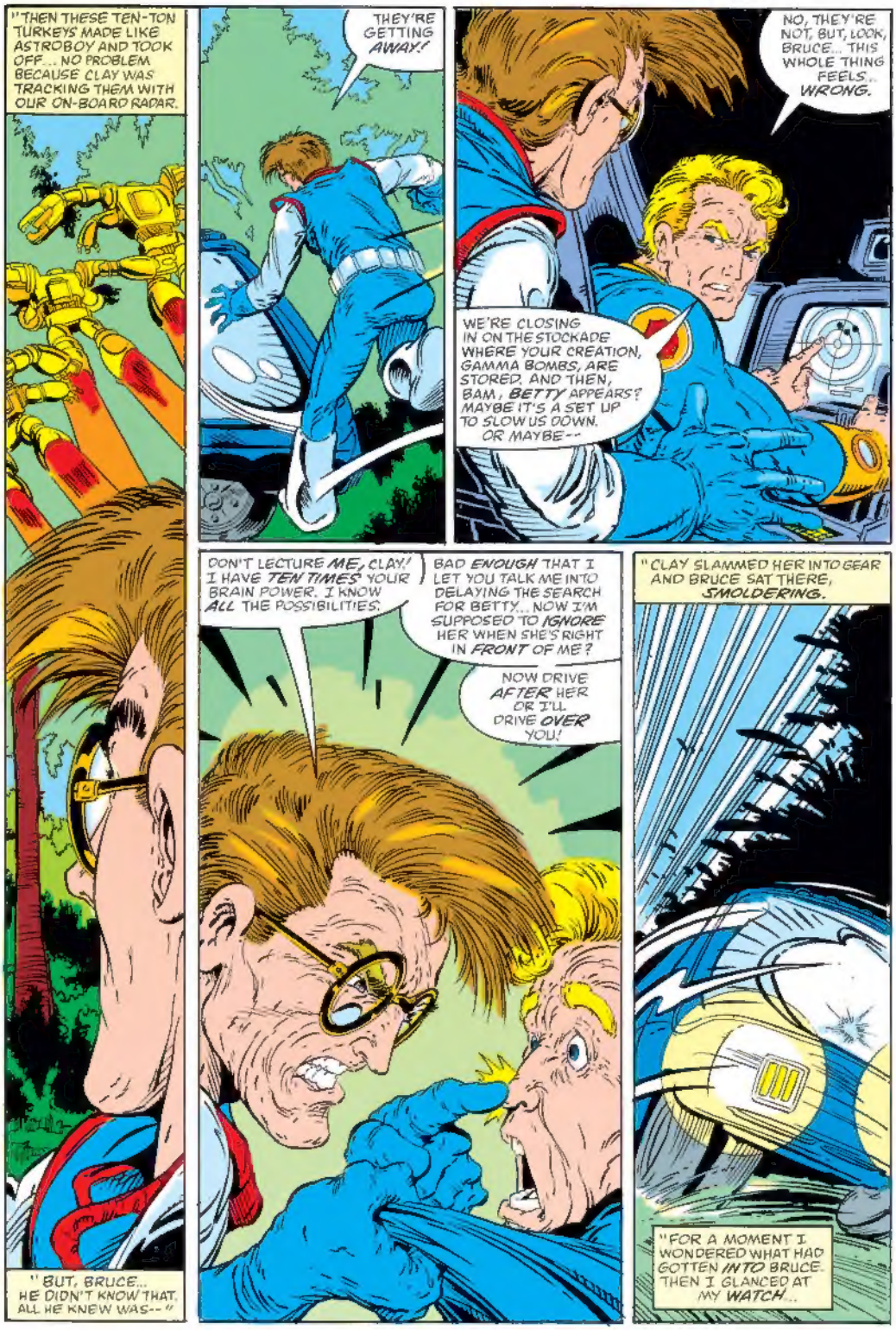
"AND WHO'S THE TATTERED CUTIE WHO SURPRISED MY JADED (BUT NO LONGER JADE, LIKE I SAID) SELF?

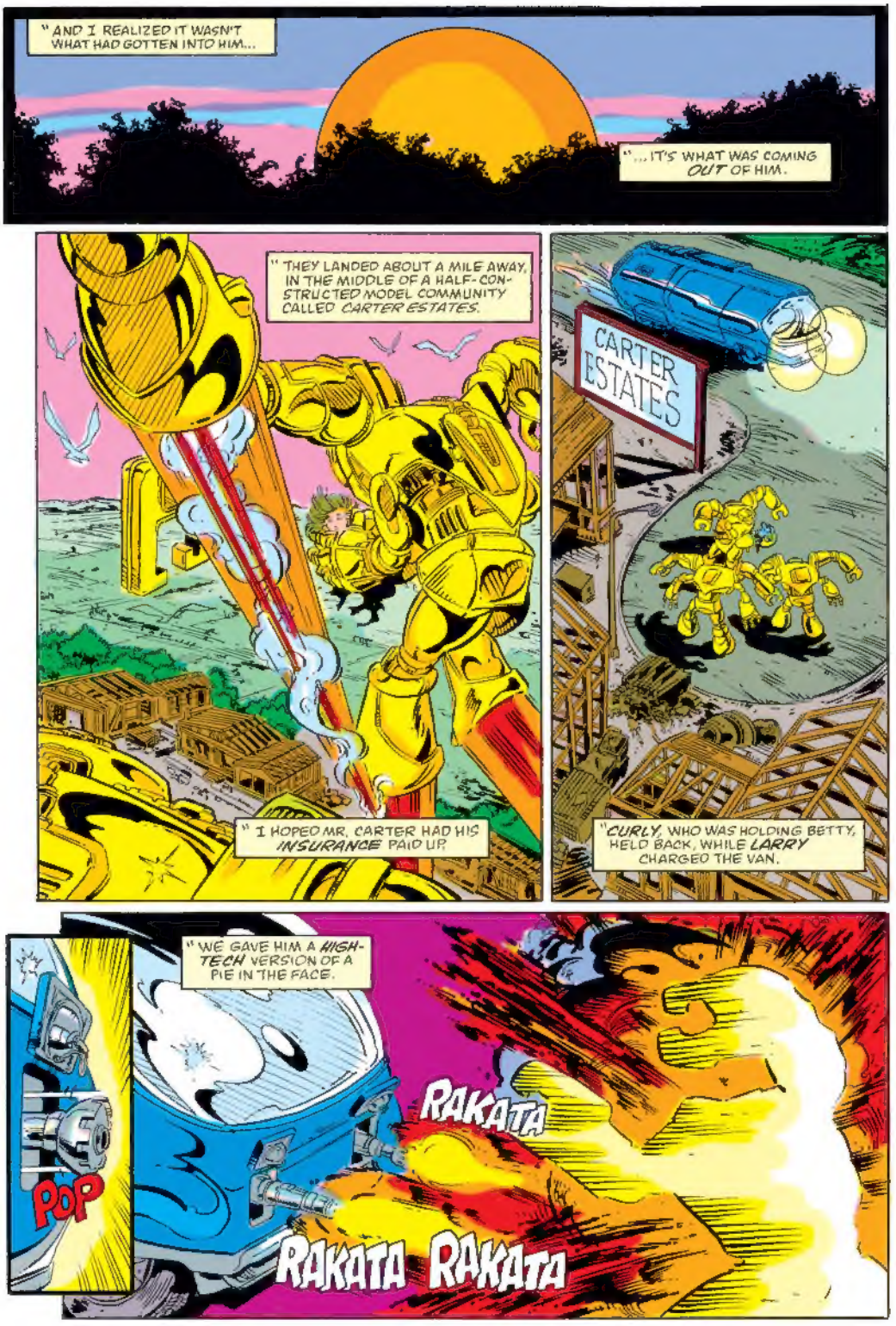
"HER NAME'S ELIZABETH ROSS TALBOT BANNER, BUT ME AND HER FRIEND *CLAY*, AND HER HUSBAND *BRUCE*, JUST CALL HER--"

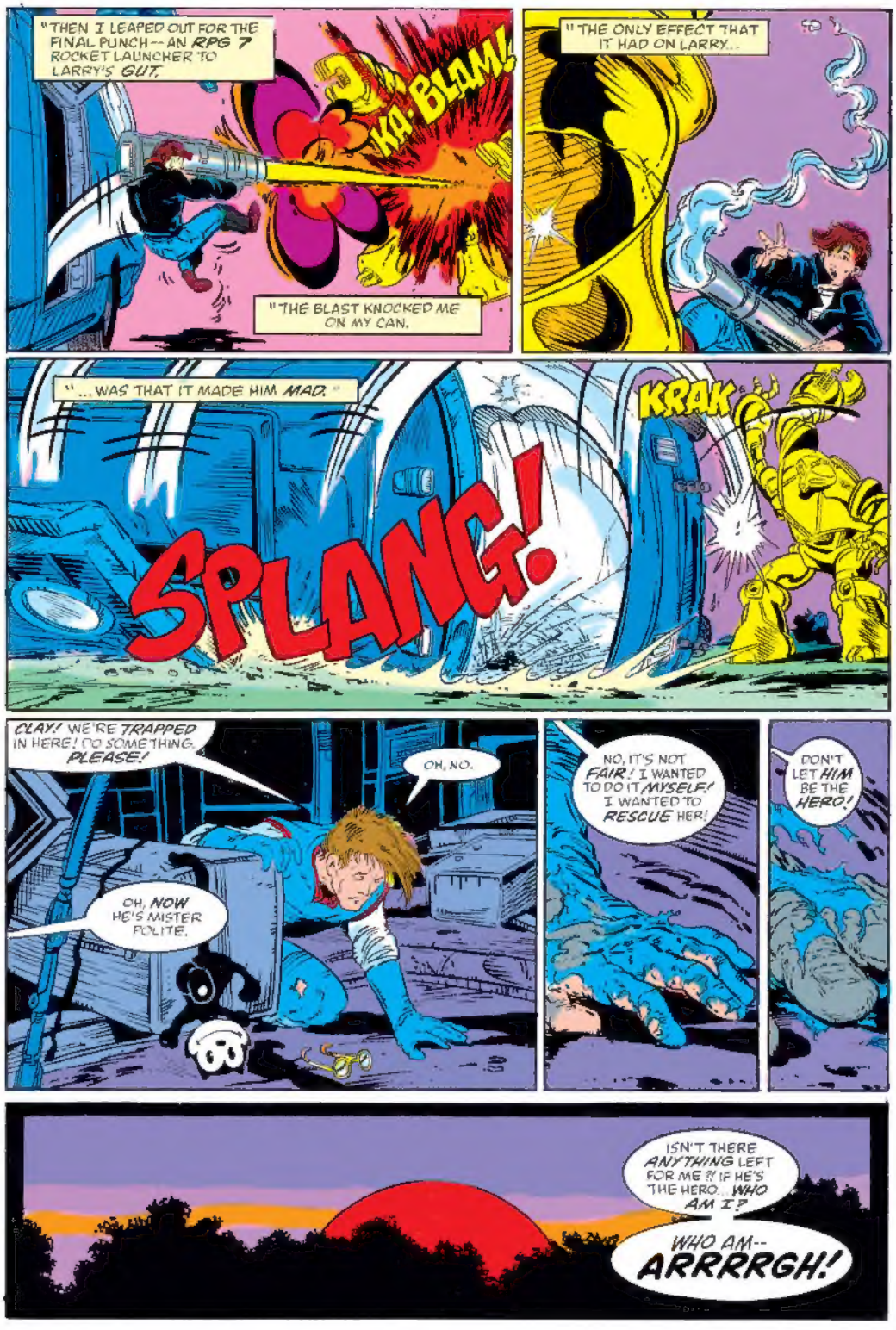
PETER DAVID WRITER / TODD McFARLANE ART / RICK PARKER LETTERING / PETRA SCOTESE COLOR / BOB HARRAS EDITOR / TOM DeFALCO EDITOR IN CHIEF

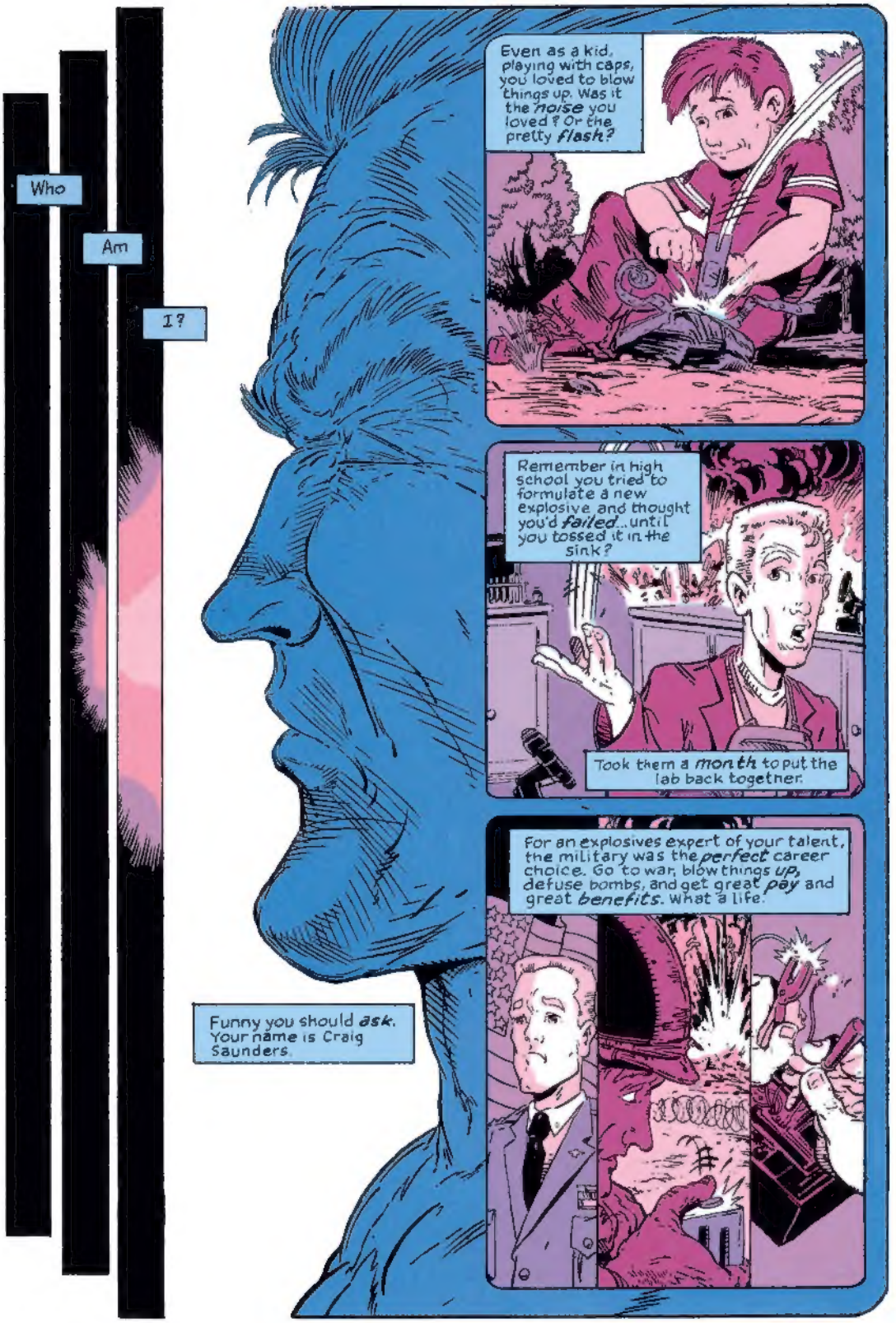

"CLAY SLAMMED ON THE BRAKES, AND I SMACKED HEADLONG INTO THE WINDSHIELD 'CAUSE I HADN'T BUCKLED IN. IT WAS MY DAY FOR MISTAKES.
SCREEEEEEE
KRUNK
"BRUCE LEAPED OUT OF THE R.V., SHOUTING BETTY'S NAME. BETTY LOOKED STUNNED. CLAY LOOKED STUNNED.
"ME, I WAS BUSY TRYING TO STOP MY NOSE FROM BLEEDING WHERE I'D SMACKED IT.
"BETTY STARTED TO STAGGER TOWARDS US-- AND THEN SOMETHING GRABBED HER.
"SOMETHING BIG.
"SOMETHING REAL BIG.
"BRUCE HAS ALWAYS KNOWN WHEN HE'S OUT-MATCHED, WHICH IS USUALLY. HE'S REAL LOGICAL THAT WAY.
"IT'S NOT COWARDICE. IT'S JUST... JUST WHO HE IS.
"HE STARTED TO BACK-UP TOWARDS THE VAN, WHERE WE HAVE ALL KINDS OF WEAPONS. AND THEN...

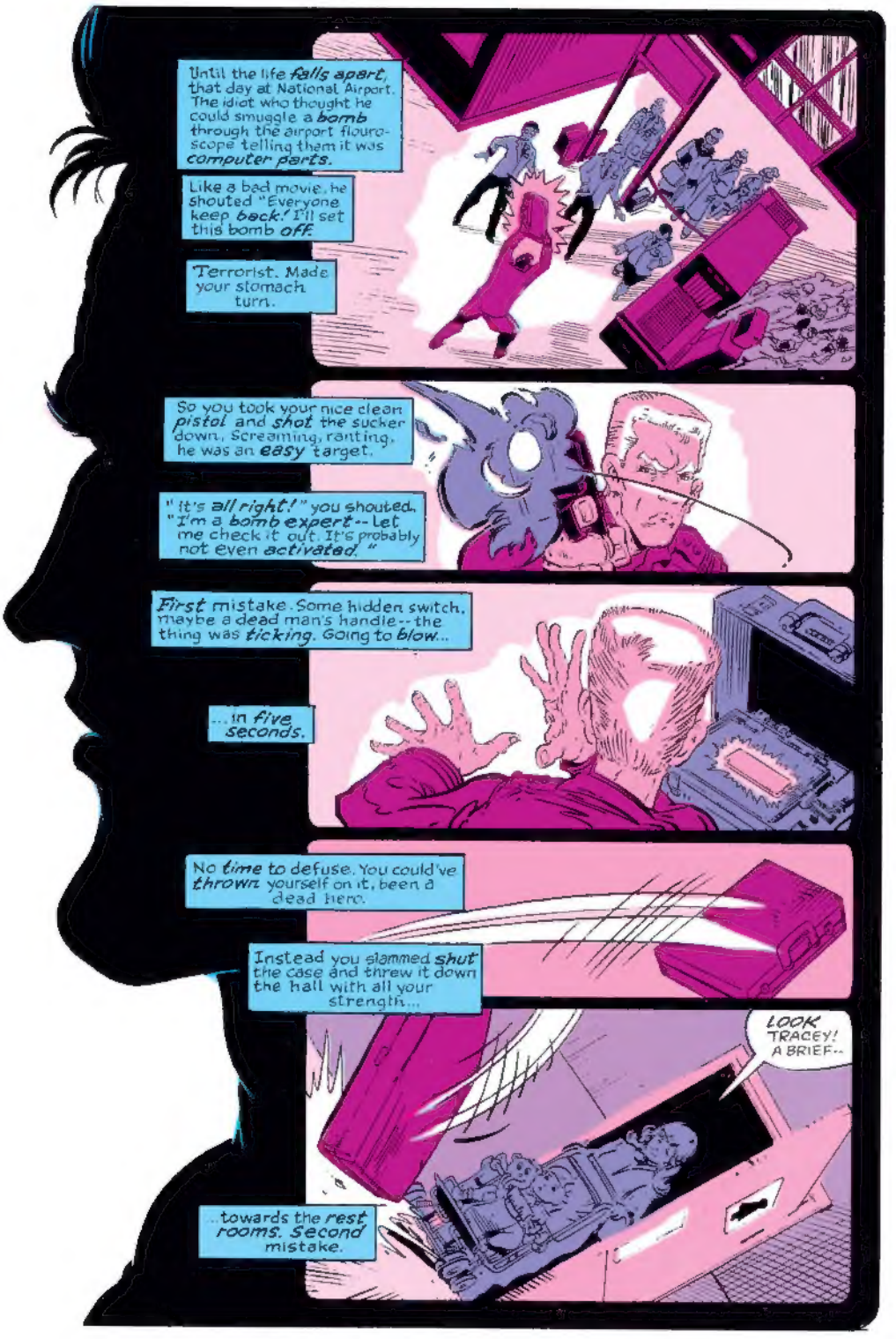

"HE GOT WEIRD."
NO. NOT THIS TIME.
BRUCE, GET OUT OF THE WAY! LET US HANDLE IT!
WEAPONS PANEL
FLAME-THROWERS... GRENADE-LAUNCHERS, MACHINE-GUNS... DECISIONS, DECISIONS...
"AND THEN BRUCE FREAKED-OUT ON US.
"BETTY WAS SHOCKED. IT WAS THE FIRST TIME BRUCE HAD BLOWN HIS COOL... AND IT WAS BECAUSE OF HER."
PUT HER DOWN! PUT HER DOWN RIGHT NOW, OR I'LL--
"TALK ABOUT YOUR HOLLOW THREATS.
"AND AS IF THAT WASN'T BAD ENOUGH, SUDDENLY LARRY AND MOE SHOWED UP, TOO.

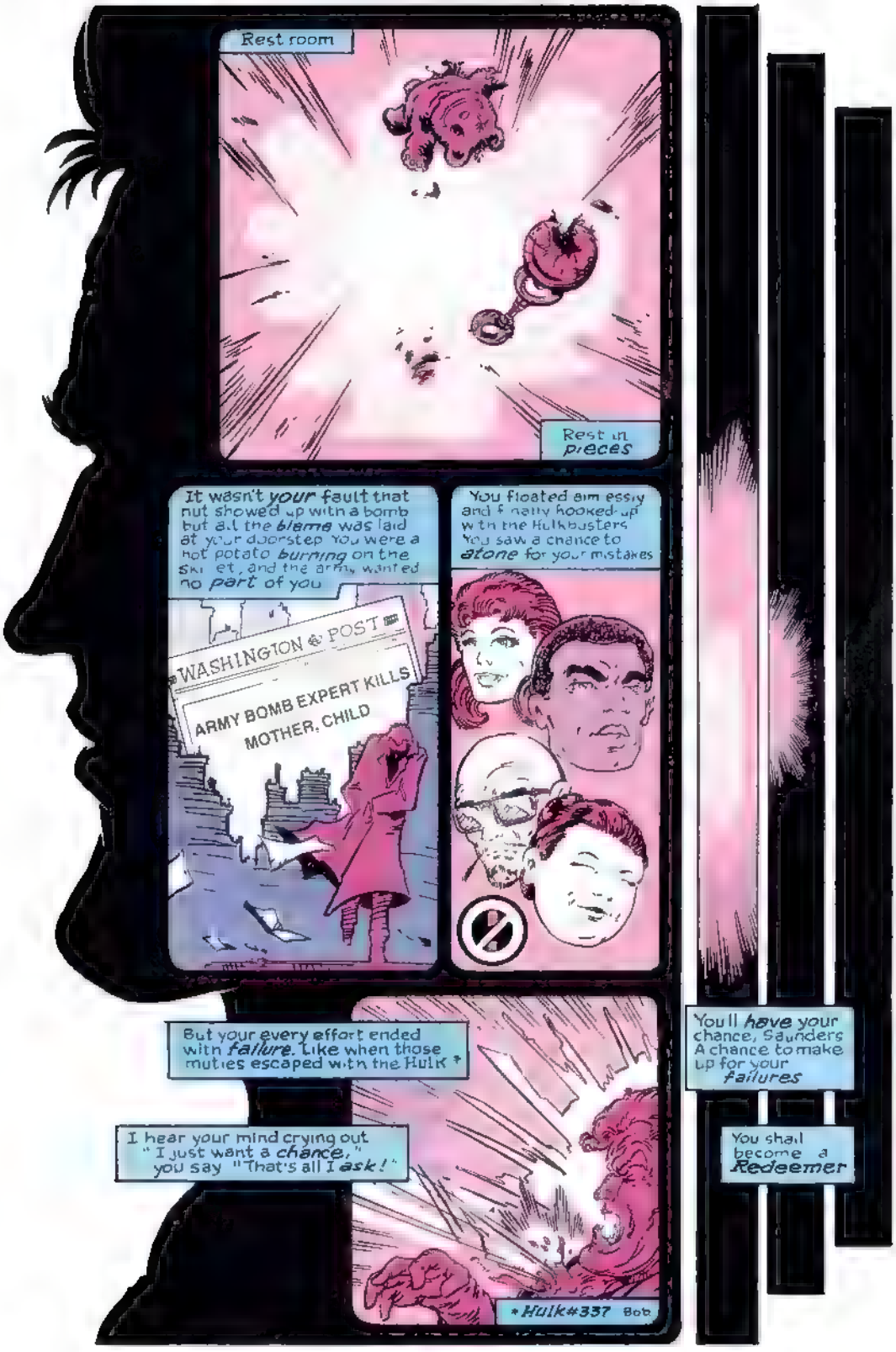

"THEN THESE TEN-TON TURKEYS MADE LIKE ASTROBOY AND TOOK OFF... NO PROBLEM BECAUSE CLAY WAS TRACKING THEM WITH OUR ON-BOARD RADAR.
"BUT, BRUCE... HE DIDN'T KNOW THAT. ALL HE KNEW WAS--"
THEY'RE GETTING AWAY!
NO, THEY'RE NOT, BUT, LOOK, BRUCE... THIS WHOLE THING FEELS... WRONG.
WE'RE CLOSING IN ON THE STOCKADE WHERE YOUR CREATION, GAMMA BOMBS, ARE STORED. AND THEN, BAM, BETTY APPEARS? MAYBE IT'S A SET UP TO SLOW US DOWN. OR MAYBE--
DON'T LECTURE ME, CLAY! I HAVE TEN TIMES YOUR BRAIN POWER. I KNOW ALL THE POSSIBILITIES.
BAD ENOUGH THAT I LET YOU TALK ME INTO DELAYING THE SEARCH FOR BETTY... NOW I'M SUPPOSED TO IGNORE HER WHEN SHE'S RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME?
NOW DRIVE AFTER HER OR I'LL DRIVE OVER YOU!
"CLAY SLAMMED HER INTO GEAR AND BRUCE SAT THERE, SMOLDERING.
"FOR A MOMENT I WONDERED WHAT HAD GOTTEN INTO BRUCE. THEN I GLANCED AT MY WATCH..

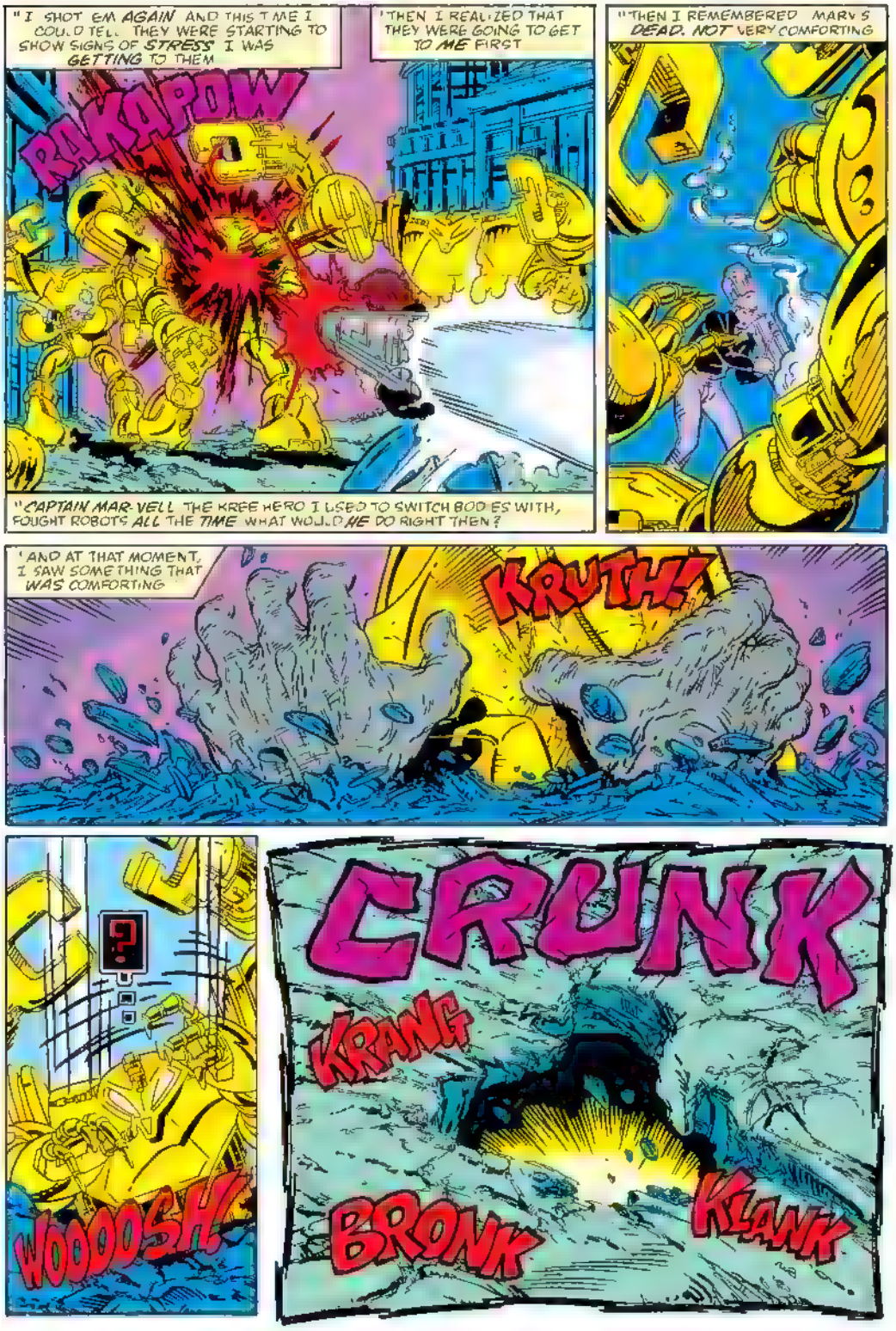

" AND I REALIZED IT WASN'T WHAT HAD GOTTEN INTO HIM...
"...IT'S WHAT WAS COMING OUT OF HIM.
" THEY LANDED ABOUT A MILE AWAY, IN THE MIDDLE OF A HALF-CONSTRUCTED MODEL COMMUNITY CALLED CARTER ESTATES.
" I HOPED MR. CARTER HAD HIS INSURANCE PAID UP.
CARTER ESTATES
"CURLY, WHO WAS HOLDING BETTY, HELD BACK, WHILE LARRY CHARGED THE VAN.
" WE GAVE HIM A HIGH-TECH VERSION OF A PIE IN THE FACE.
POP
RAKATA
RAKATA RAKATA

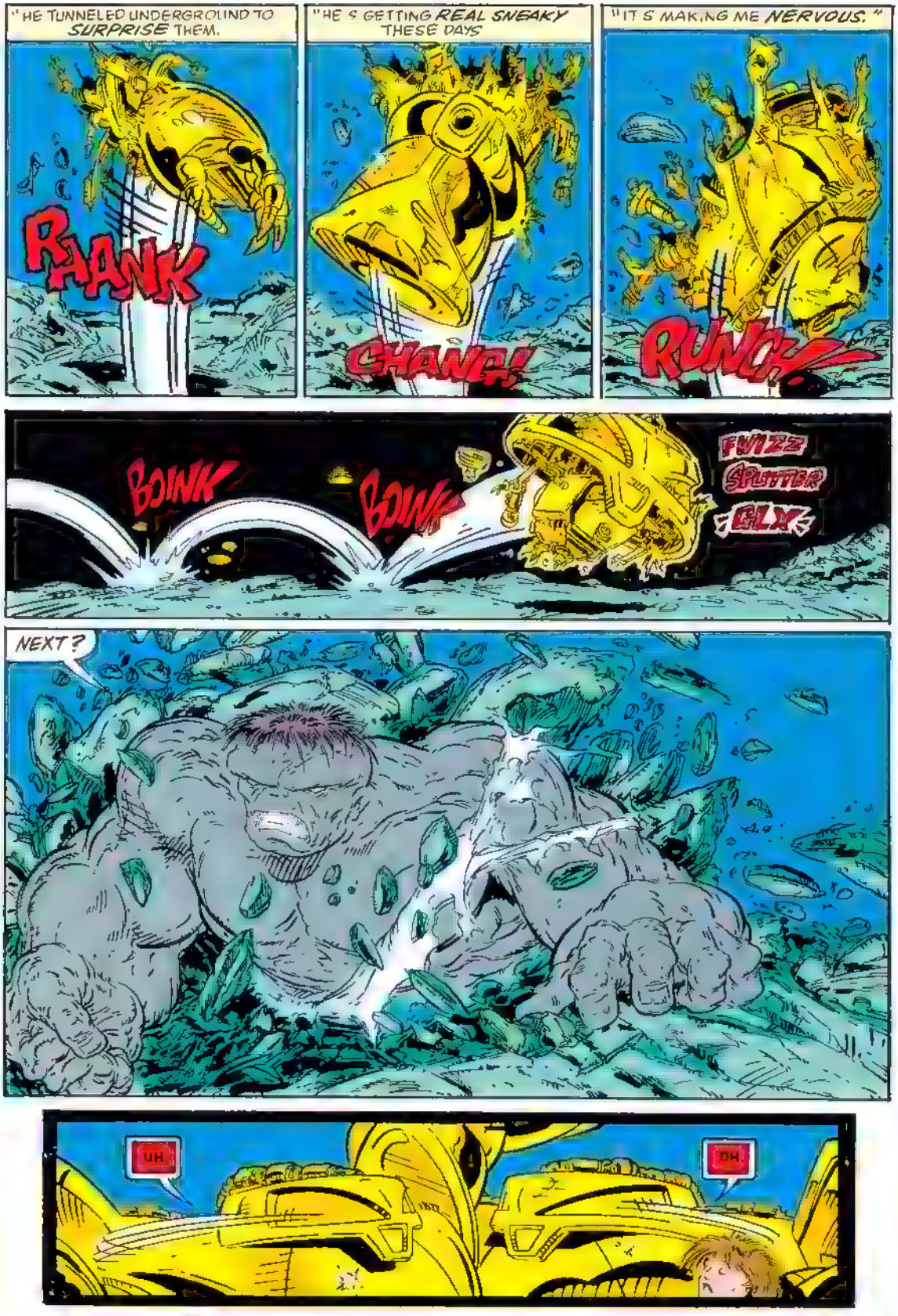

"THEN I LEAPED OUT FOR THE FINAL PUNCH -- AN RPG 7 ROCKET LAUNCHER TO LARRY'S GUT.
KA-BLAM!
"THE BLAST KNOCKED ME ON MY CAN.
"THE ONLY EFFECT THAT IT HAD ON LARRY...
"...WAS THAT IT MADE HIM MAD."
SPLANG!
KRAK
CLAY! WE'RE TRAPPED IN HERE! DO SOMETHING, PLEASE!
OH, NO.
OH, NOW HE'S MISTER POLITE.
NO, IT'S NOT FAIR! I WANTED TO DO IT MYSELF! I WANTED TO RESCUE HER!
DON'T LET HIM BE THE HERO!
ISN'T THERE ANYTHING LEFT FOR ME?! IF HE'S THE HERO... WHO AM I?
WHO AM-- ARRRRGH!

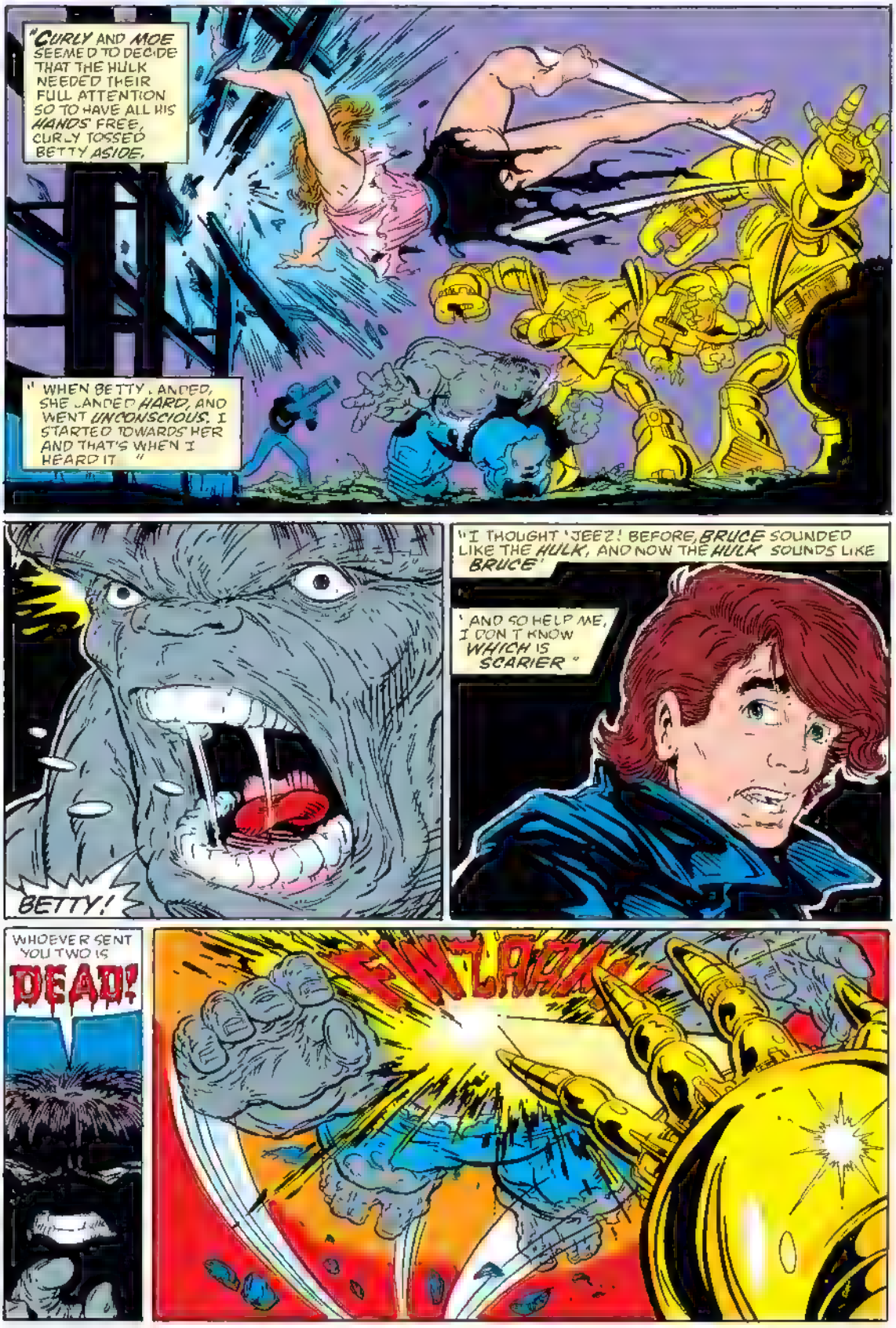

Who
Am
I?
Even as a kid, playing with caps, you loved to blow things up. Was it the noise you loved? Or the pretty flash?
Remember in high school you tried to formulate a new explosive and thought you'd failed...until you tossed it in the sink?
Took them a month to put the lab back together.
For an explosives expert of your talent, the military was the perfect career choice. Go to war, blow things up, defuse bombs, and get great pay and great benefits. What a life.
Funny you should ask. Your name is Craig Saunders.


Until the life *falls apart*, that day at National Airport. The idiot who thought he could smuggle a *bomb* through the airport flouroscope telling them it was *computer parts*.
Like a bad movie, he shouted "Everyone keep *back!* I'll set this bomb *off*.
Terrorist. Made your stomach turn.
So you took your nice clean *pistol* and *shot* the sucker down. Screaming, ranting, he was an *easy* target.
"It's *all right!*" you shouted. "I'm a *bomb expert*--let me check it out. It's probably not even *activated*."
First mistake. Some hidden switch, maybe a dead man's handle--the thing was *ticking*. Going to *blow*...
...in *five seconds*.
No *time* to defuse. You could've *thrown* yourself on it, been a dead hero.
Instead you slammed *shut* the case and threw it down the hall with all your strength...
LOOK TRACEY! A BRIEF--
...towards the *rest rooms*. *Second* mistake.

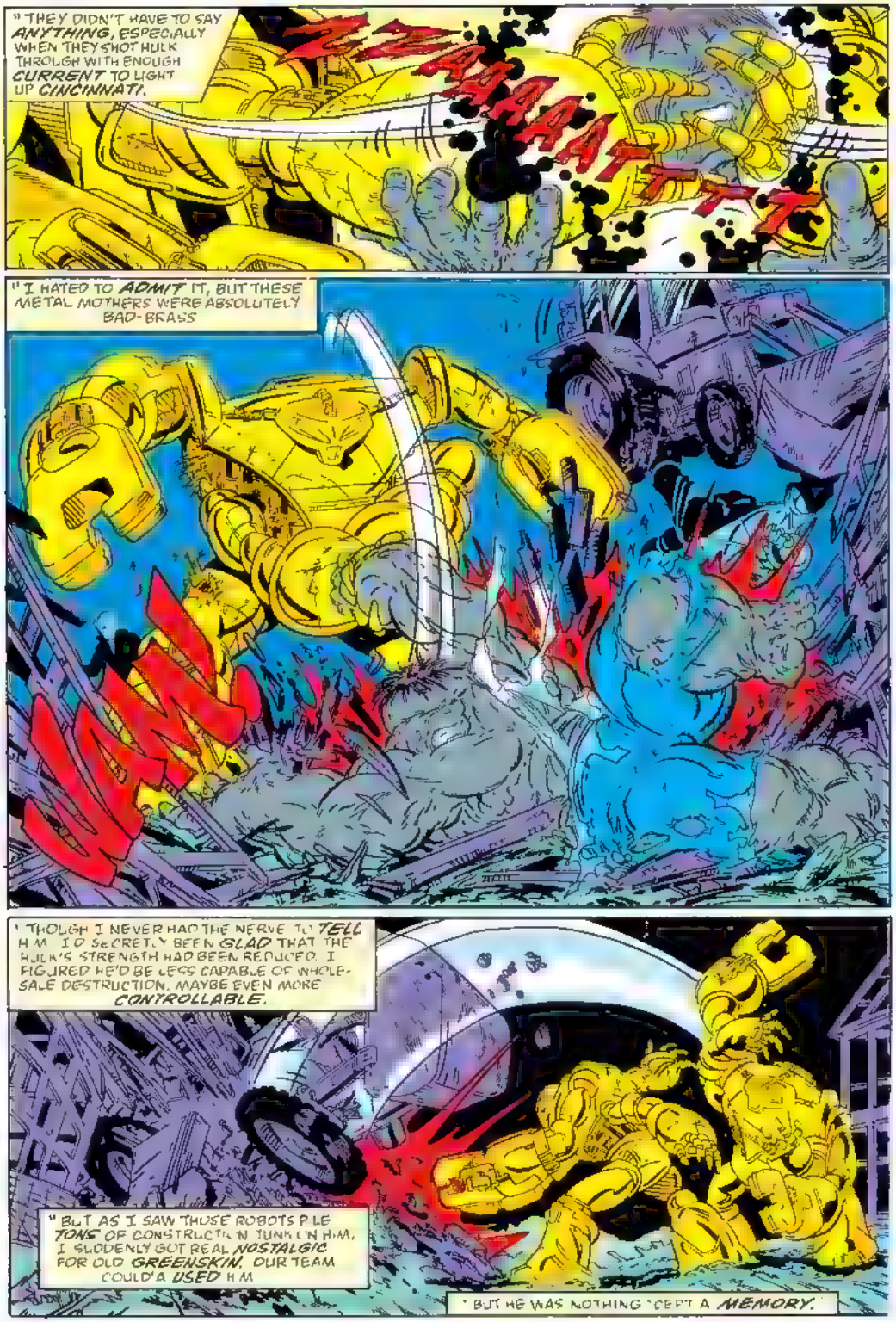

Rest room
Rest in pieces
It wasn't your fault that nut showed up with a bomb but all the blame was laid at your doorstep. You were a hot potato burning on the skillet, and the army wanted no part of you
WASHINGTON POST
ARMY BOMB EXPERT KILLS MOTHER, CHILD
You floated aimlessly and finally hooked up with the Hulkbusters. You saw a chance to atone for your mistakes
But your every effort ended with failure. Like when those muties escaped with the Hulk *
I hear your mind crying out. "I just want a chance," you say. "That's all I ask!"
*Hulk#337 Bob
You'll have your chance, Saunders. A chance to make up for your failures
You shall become a Redeemer

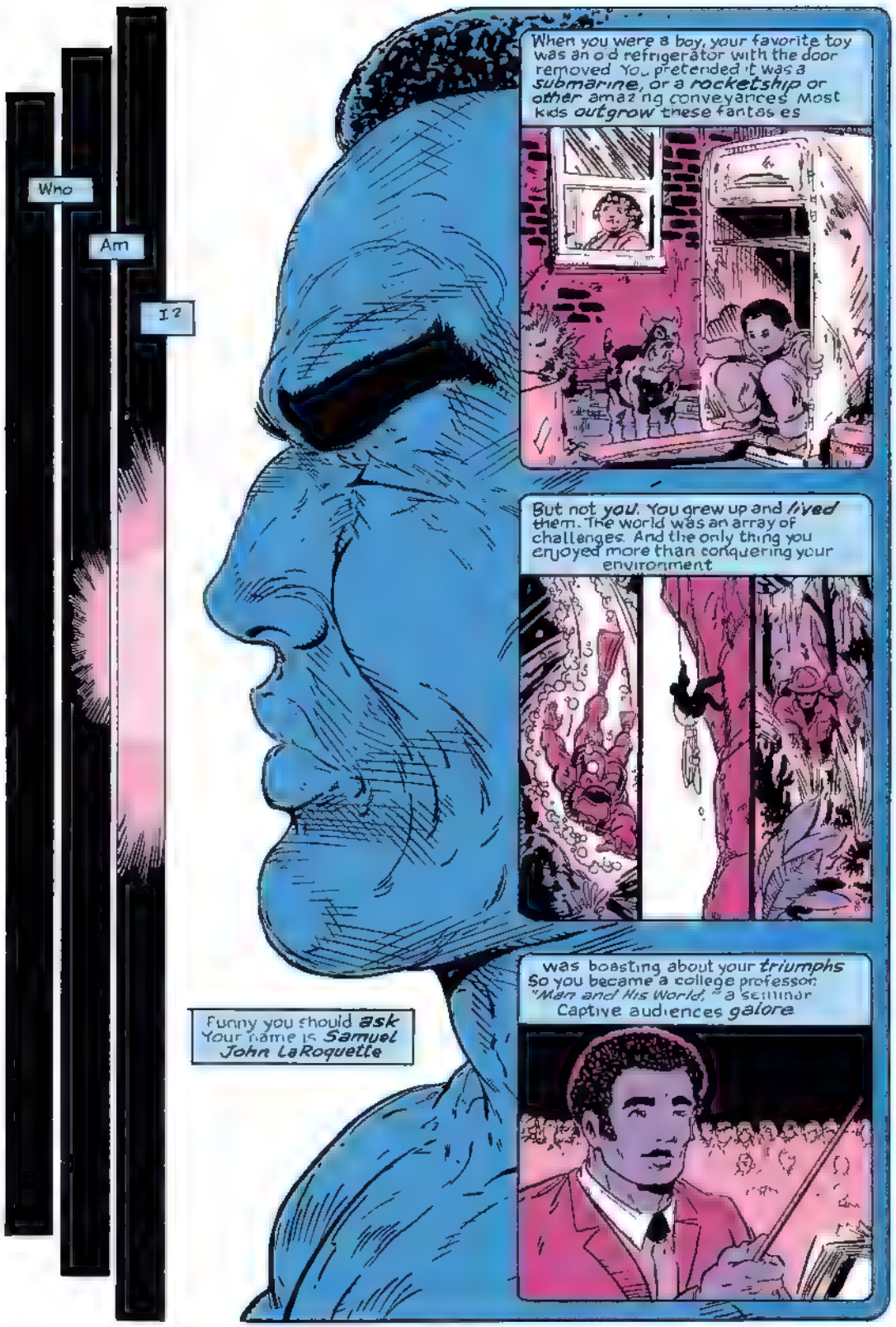

"I SHOT 'EM AGAIN AND THIS TIME I COULD TELL THEY WERE STARTING TO SHOW SIGNS OF STRESS I WAS GETTING TO THEM
THEN I REALIZED THAT THEY WERE GOING TO GET TO ME FIRST
KA-KA-POW
"THEN I REMEMBERED MARV'S DEAD. NOT VERY COMFORTING
"CAPTAIN MAR-VELL THE KREE HERO I USED TO SWITCH BODIES WITH, FOUGHT ROBOTS ALL THE TIME WHAT WOULD HE DO RIGHT THEN?
AND AT THAT MOMENT, I SAW SOMETHING THAT WAS COMFORTING
KRUTH!
?
WOOOOSH
CRUNK
KRANG
BRONK
KLANK

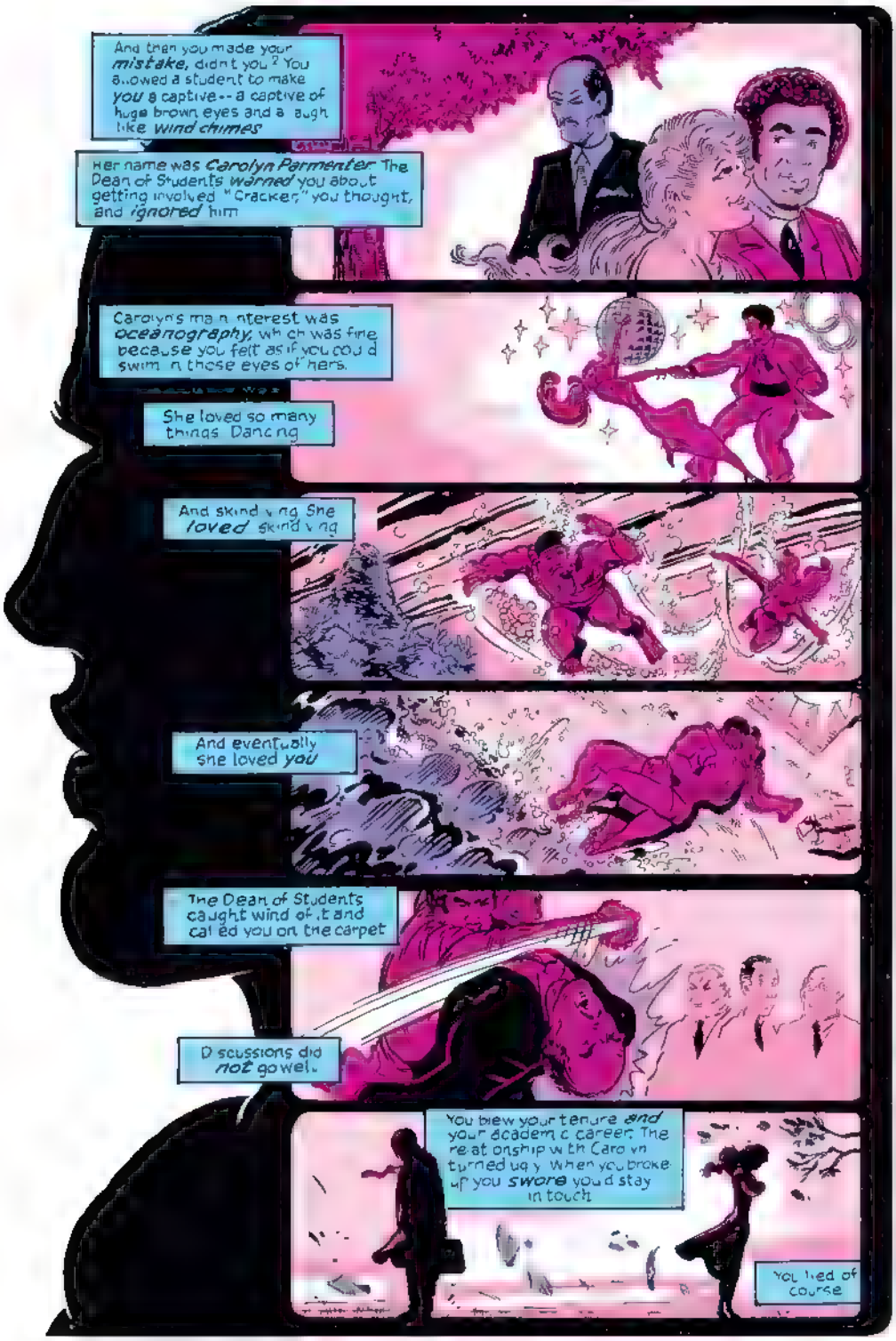

"HE TUNNELED UNDERGROUND TO SURPRISE THEM.
RRANK
"HE'S GETTING REAL SNEAKY THESE DAYS
CHANG!
"IT'S MAKING ME NERVOUS."
RUNCH
BOINK
BOINK
FWIZZ
SPUTTER
FLY
NEXT?
UH
OH

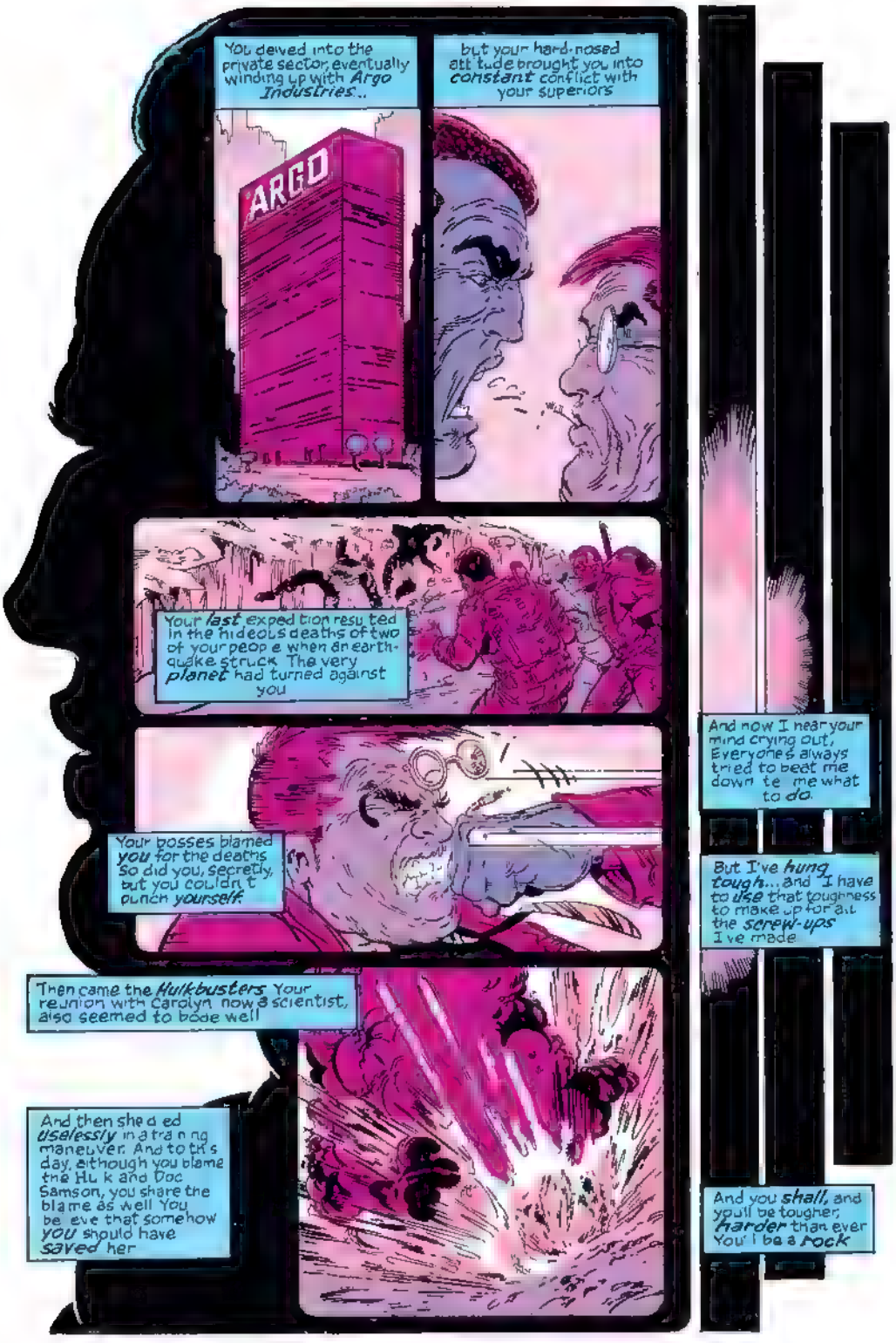

"CURLY AND MOE SEEMED TO DECIDE THAT THE HULK NEEDED THEIR FULL ATTENTION SO TO HAVE ALL HIS HANDS FREE, CURLY TOSSED BETTY ASIDE.
" WHEN BETTY LANDED, SHE LANDED HARD, AND WENT UNCONSCIOUS. I STARTED TOWARDS HER AND THAT'S WHEN I HEARD IT "
BETTY!
"I THOUGHT 'JEEZ! BEFORE, BRUCE SOUNDED LIKE THE HULK, AND NOW THE HULK SOUNDS LIKE BRUCE'
'AND SO HELP ME, I DON'T KNOW WHICH IS SCARIER."
WHOEVER SENT YOU TWO IS
DEAD!
KLAK

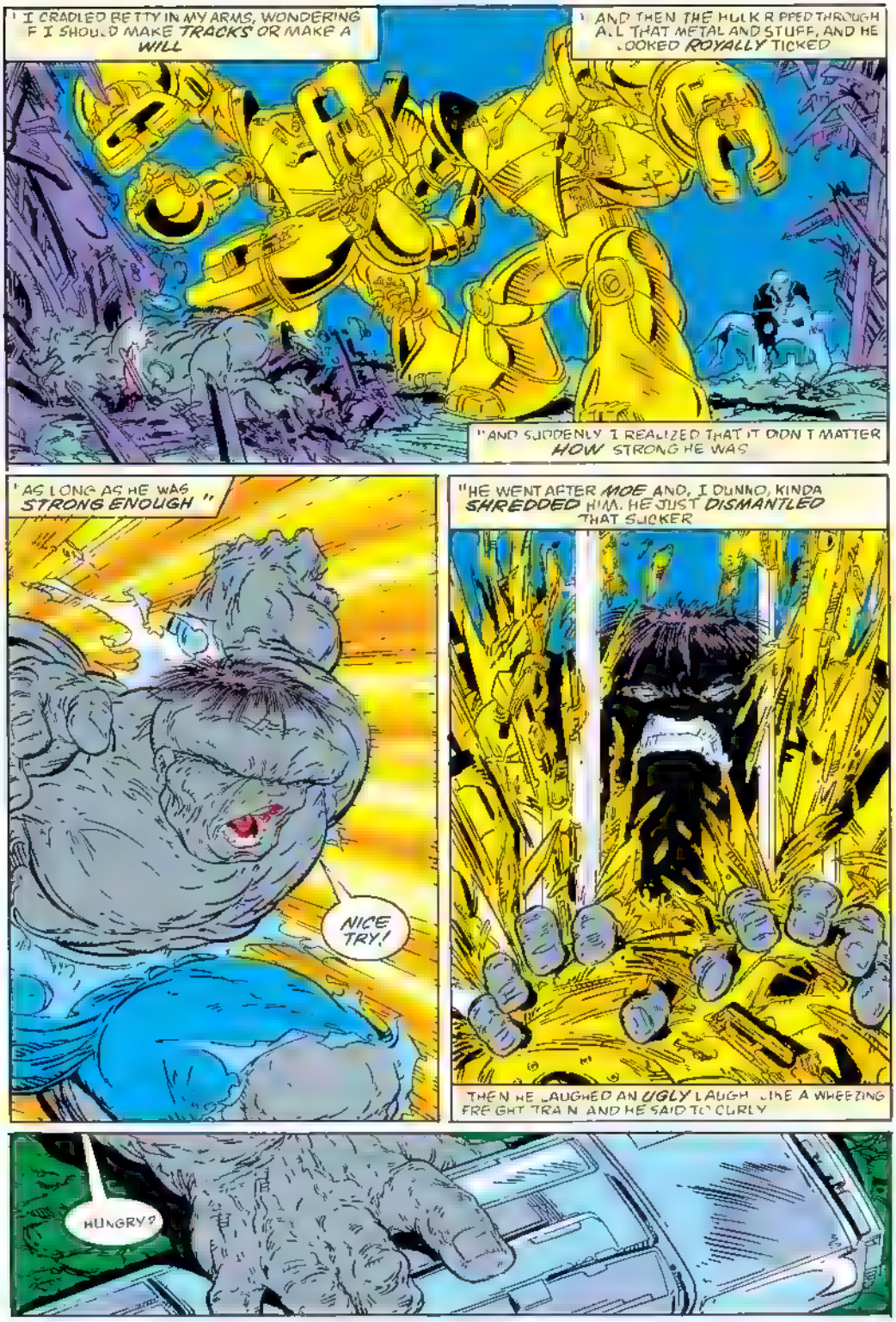
"ONCE A BLAST LIKE THIS WOULDN'T HAVE EVEN SLOWED HIM DOWN. NOW, THOUGH, HE NEEDED A MOMENT TO PULL HIMSELF TOGETHER.
"BUT ONLY A MOMENT."
WANG!
I HATE FIGHTING STUPID ROBOTS!
YOU DON'T SCREAM OR BLEED OR NOTHING! IT'S NO FUN!
KRUNCH!
C'MON! SAY SOMETHING!


"THEY DIDN'T HAVE TO SAY ANYTHING, ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY SHOT HULK THROUGH WITH ENOUGH CURRENT TO LIGHT UP CINCINNATI.
ZZZAAAAATTTT
"I HATED TO ADMIT IT, BUT THESE METAL MOTHERS WERE ABSOLUTELY BAD-BRASS
WHAM
"THOUGH I NEVER HAD THE NERVE TO TELL HIM, I'D SECRETLY BEEN GLAD THAT THE HULK'S STRENGTH HAD BEEN REDUCED. I FIGURED HE'D BE LESS CAPABLE OF WHOLESALE DESTRUCTION. MAYBE EVEN MORE CONTROLLABLE.
"BUT AS I SAW THOSE ROBOTS PILE TONS OF CONSTRUCTION JUNK ON HIM, I SUDDENLY GOT REAL NOSTALGIC FOR OLD GREENSKIN. OUR TEAM COULD'A USED HIM
"BUT HE WAS NOTHING 'CEPT A MEMORY."

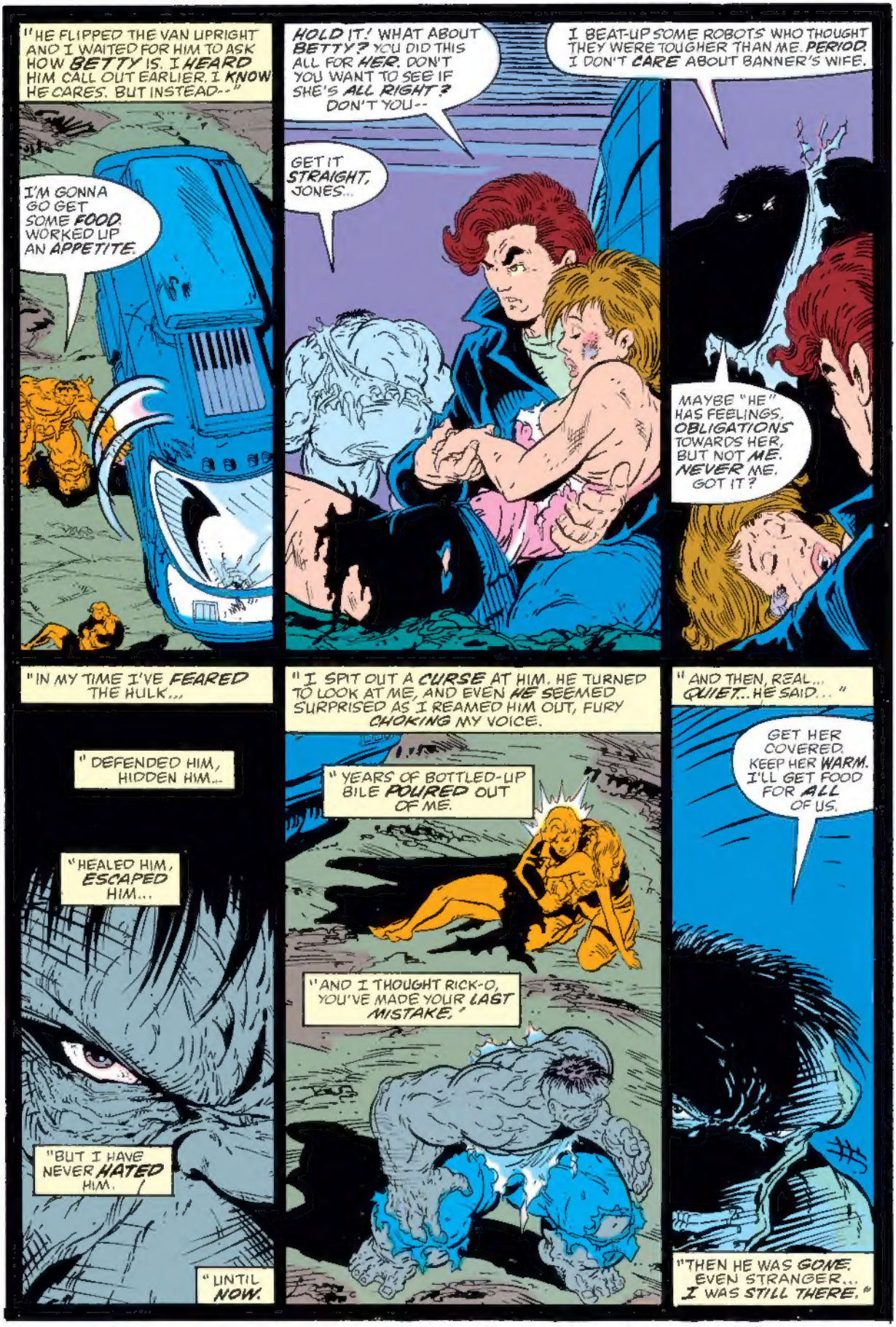

Who
Am
I?
When you were a boy, your favorite toy was an old refrigerator with the door removed. You pretended it was a *submarine*, or a *rocketship* or other amazing conveyances. Most kids *outgrow* these fantasies
But not *you*. You grew up and *lived* them. The world was an array of challenges. And the only thing you enjoyed more than conquering your environment
was boasting about your *triumphs*. So you became a college professor: "*Man and His World*," a seminar. Captive audiences *galore*
Funny you should *ask*. Your name is *Samuel John LaRoquette*

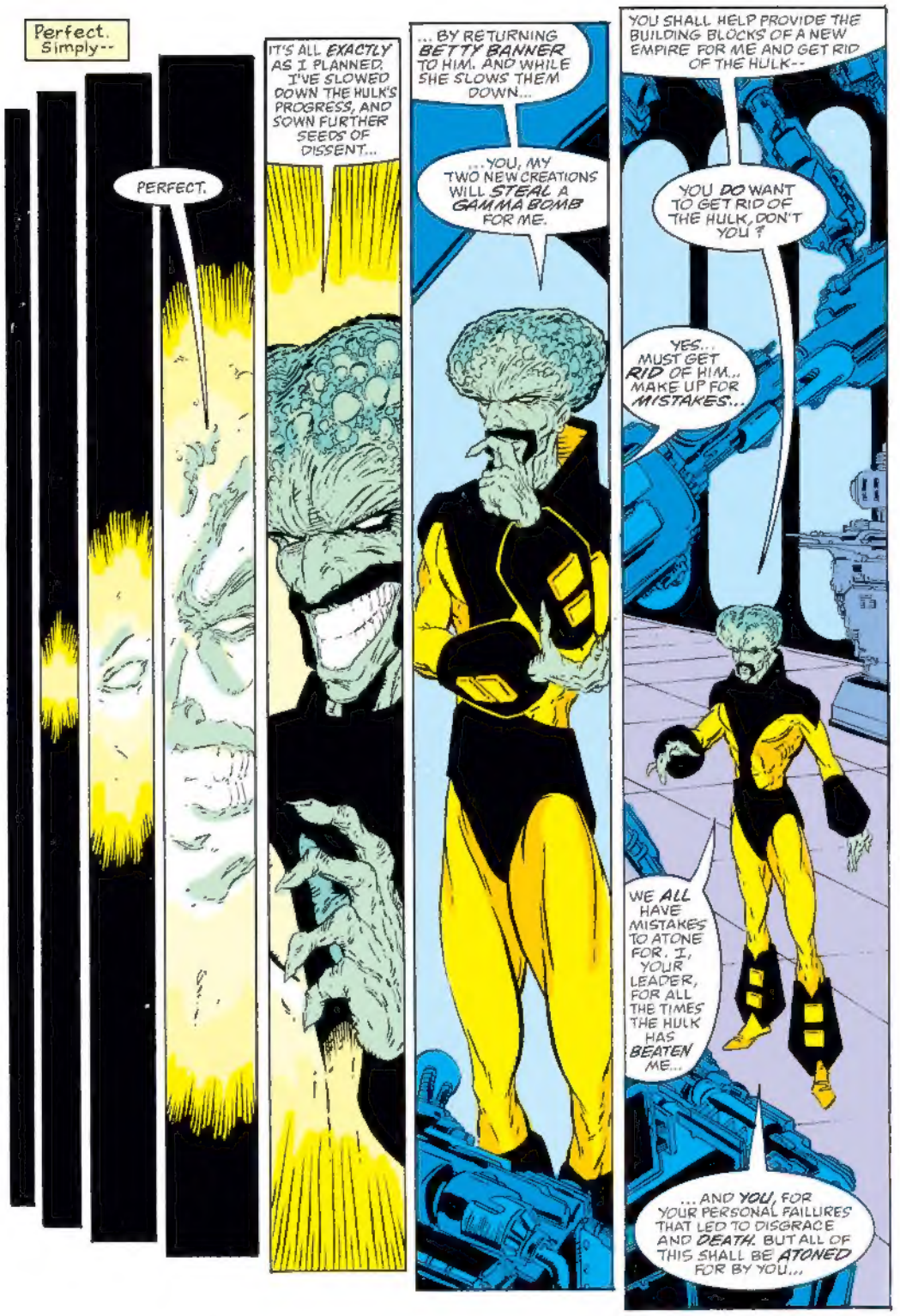

And then you made your *mistake*, didn't you? You allowed a student to make *you* a captive -- a captive of huge brown eyes and a laugh like *wind chimes*
Her name was *Carolyn Parmenter*. The Dean of Students *warned* you about getting involved. "Cracker," you thought, and *ignored* him.
Carolyn's main interest was *oceanography*, which was fine because you felt as if you could swim in those eyes of hers.
She loved so many things. Dancing
And skindiving. She *loved* skindiving
And eventually she loved *you*
The Dean of Students caught wind of it and called you on the carpet.
Discussions did *not* go well.
You blew your tenure *and* your academic career. The relationship with Carolyn turned ugly. When you broke up you *swore* you'd stay in touch.
You lied. Of course.


You delved into the private sector, eventually winding up with Argo Industries...
ARGO
but your hard-nosed attitude brought you into constant conflict with your superiors
Your last expedition resulted in the hideous deaths of two of your people when an earthquake struck. The very planet had turned against you
Your bosses blamed you for the deaths. So did you, secretly, but you couldn't punch yourself.
Then came the Hulkbusters. Your reunion with Carolyn, now a scientist, also seemed to bode well
And then she died uselessly in a training maneuver. And to this day, although you blame the Hulk and Doc Samson, you share the blame as well. You believe that somehow you should have saved her
And now I hear your mind crying out, Everyone's always tried to beat me down to me what to do.
But I've hung tough... and I have to use that toughness to make up for all the screw-ups I've made
And you shall, and you'll be tougher, harder than ever. You'll be a rock


I CRADLED BETTY IN MY ARMS, WONDERING IF I SHOULD MAKE TRACKS OR MAKE A WILL
AND THEN THE HULK RIPPED THROUGH ALL THAT METAL AND STUFF, AND HE LOOKED ROYALLY TICKED
AND SUDDENLY I REALIZED THAT IT DIDN'T MATTER HOW STRONG HE WAS
AS LONG AS HE WAS STRONG ENOUGH"
NICE TRY!
HE WENT AFTER MOE AND, I DUNNO, KINDA SHREDDED HIM. HE JUST DISMANTLED THAT SUCKER
THEN HE LAUGHED AN UGLY LAUGH LIKE A WHEEZING FREIGHT TRAIN AND HE SAID TO CURLY
HUNGRY?

SPLANG
EAT THIS!
BUCHOWW
"IT'S NICE TO SEE SOMEONE WHO ENJOYS HIS WORK.
POOOF


"HE FLIPPED THE VAN UPRIGHT AND I WAITED FOR HIM TO ASK HOW BETTY IS. I HEARD HIM CALL OUT EARLIER. I KNOW HE CARES. BUT INSTEAD--"
I'M GONNA GO GET SOME FOOD. WORKED UP AN APPETITE.
HOLD IT.' WHAT ABOUT BETTY? YOU DID THIS ALL FOR HER. DON'T YOU WANT TO SEE IF SHE'S ALL RIGHT? DON'T YOU--
GET IT STRAIGHT, JONES...
I BEAT-UP SOME ROBOTS WHO THOUGHT THEY WERE TOUGHER THAN ME. PERIOD. I DON'T CARE ABOUT BANNER'S WIFE.
MAYBE "HE" HAS FEELINGS, OBLIGATIONS TOWARDS HER, BUT NOT ME. NEVER ME. GOT IT?
"IN MY TIME I'VE FEARED THE HULK...,
" DEFENDED HIM, HIDDEN HIM...
"HEALED HIM, ESCAPED HIM...
"BUT I HAVE NEVER HATED HIM.
" UNTIL NOW.
"I SPIT OUT A CURSE AT HIM. HE TURNED TO LOOK AT ME, AND EVEN HE SEEMED SURPRISED AS I REAMED HIM OUT, FURY CHOKING MY VOICE.
" YEARS OF BOTTLED-UP BILE POURED OUT OF ME.
"AND I THOUGHT RICK-O, YOU'VE MADE YOUR LAST MISTAKE."
" AND THEN, REAL... QUIET.. HE SAID... "
GET HER COVERED. KEEP HER WARM. I'LL GET FOOD FOR ALL OF US.
"THEN HE WAS GONE. EVEN STRANGER... I WAS STILL THERE."


Perfect. Simply--
PERFECT.
IT'S ALL EXACTLY AS I PLANNED. I'VE SLOWED DOWN THE HULK'S PROGRESS, AND SOWN FURTHER SEEDS OF DISSENT...
... BY RETURNING BETTY BANNER TO HIM. AND WHILE SHE SLOWS THEM DOWN...
...YOU, MY TWO NEW CREATIONS WILL STEAL A GAMMA BOMB FOR ME.
YOU SHALL HELP PROVIDE THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF A NEW EMPIRE FOR ME AND GET RID OF THE HULK--
YOU DO WANT TO GET RID OF THE HULK, DON'T YOU?
YES... MUST GET RID OF HIM... MAKE UP FOR MISTAKES...
WE ALL HAVE MISTAKES TO ATONE FOR. I, YOUR LEADER, FOR ALL THE TIMES THE HULK HAS BEATEN ME...
... AND YOU, FOR YOUR PERSONAL FAILURES THAT LED TO DISGRACE AND DEATH. BUT ALL OF THIS SHALL BE ATONED FOR BY YOU...

MY ROCK...
...AND MY REDEEMER!
NEXT
ROCK AND REDEEMER IN ACTION! BRUCE AND BETTY AND THE HULK HAVE IT OUT! ALL THIS IN.....
GAMMA BOMB RUN!